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IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS:

HACK/SLASH

My First Maniac

BEFORE SHE TRAVELED THE WORLD WITH HER MONSTROUS PARTNER, *VLAD*, HUNTING DOWN AND *DESTROYING* SLASHERS, *CASSIE HACK* WAS THE LONE SURVIVOR OF AN ATTACK BY A *SLASHER* CALLED THE *LUNCH LADY*... A SLASHER THAT HAPPENED TO BE HER *MOTHER!*

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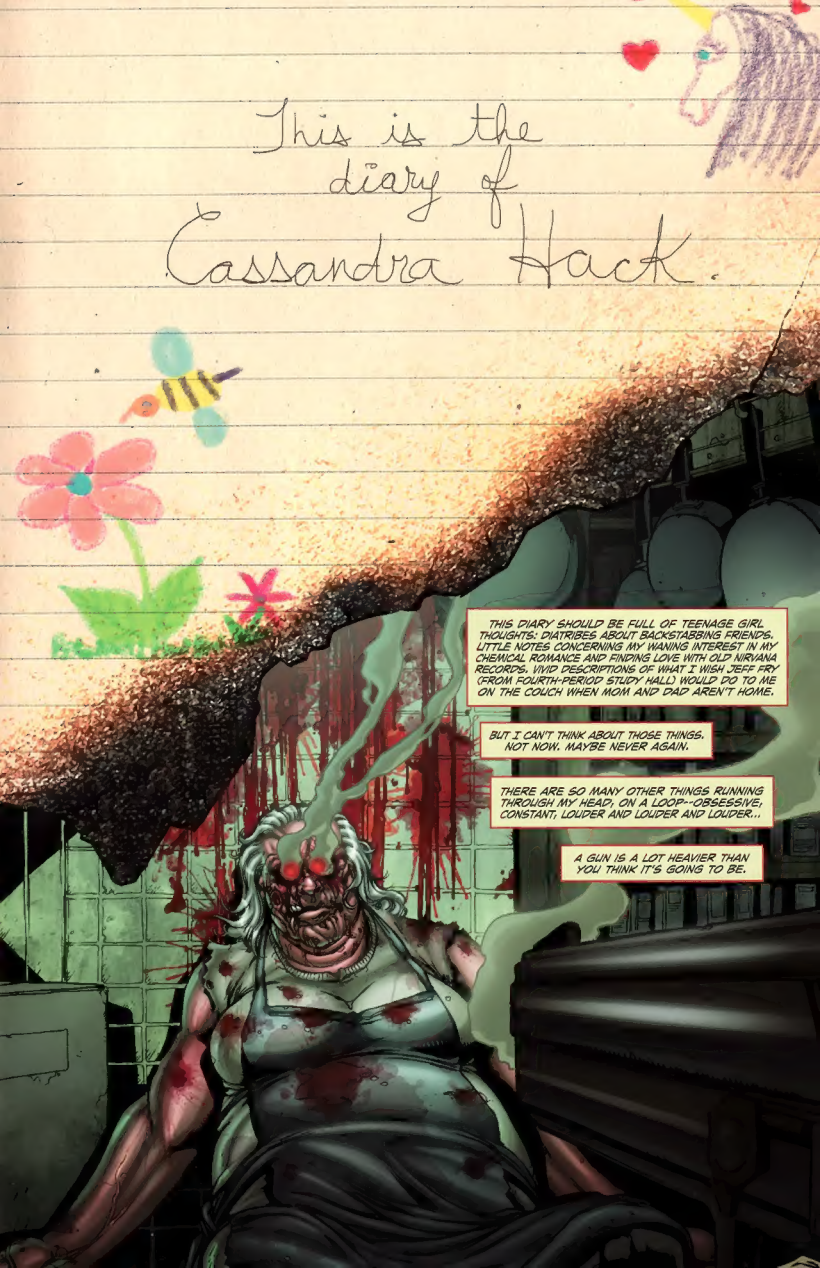
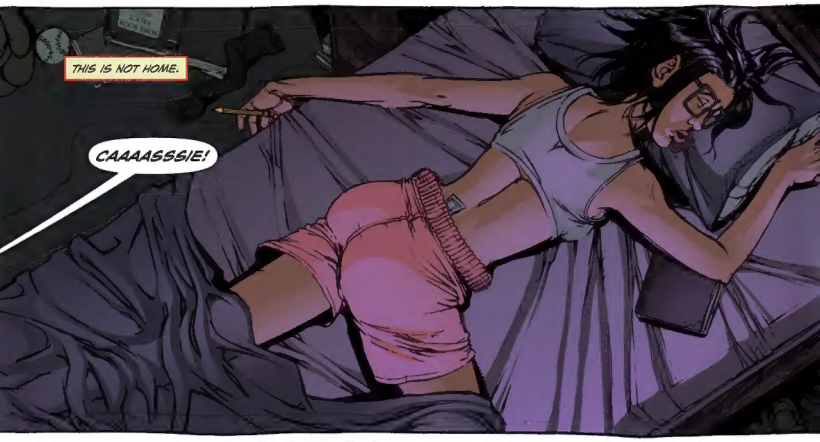

This is the diary of Cassandra Hack.
THIS DIARY SHOULD BE FULL OF TEENAGE GIRL THOUGHTS: DIATRIBES ABOUT BACKSTABBING FRIENDS, LITTLE NOTES CONCERNING MY WANING INTEREST IN MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE AND FINDING LOVE WITH OLD NIRVANA RECORDS. VIVID DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT I WISH JEFF FRY (FROM FOURTH-PERIOD STUDY HALL) WOULD DO TO ME ON THE COUCH WHEN MOM AND DAD AREN'T HOME.
BUT I CAN'T THINK ABOUT THOSE THINGS. NOT NOW. MAYBE NEVER AGAIN.
THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER THINGS RUNNING THROUGH MY HEAD, ON A LOOP--OBSESSIVE, CONSTANT, LOUDER AND LOUDER AND LOUDER...
A GUN IS A LOT HEAVIER THAN YOU THINK IT'S GOING TO BE.

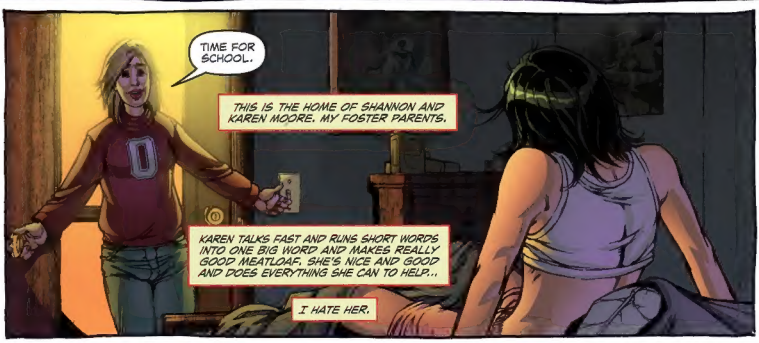
I'M IN THAT KITCHEN AT MY SCHOOL. NOT MY FIRST SCHOOL--THE ALL-GIRLS SCHOOL THEY PUT ME IN AFTER MY MOM KILLED ANYONE WHO BULLIED ME, THEN SERVED THEM AS LUNCH.
AND I'M FEELING DÉJÀ VU, BECAUSE A KITCHEN IS WHERE MY MOM'S STORY ENDED THE FIRST TIME.
BUT IT DIDN'T END. IT STARTED AGAIN, AND SHE FOLLOWED ME HERE. SHE GRABBED SOME GIRLS: ANNE MARIE SAINT, STEPHANIE GREY.
SHE GUTTED THEM AND HUNG THEM IN THE FREEZER.
AND THIS GIRL--THIS GIRL WHOSE NAME I CAN'T REMEMBER BECAUSE ALL I CAN THINK OF IS THE SMELL OF THE GUNSHOTS, AND THE WEIGHT OF THE GUN, AND HOW I'M LOOKING AT MY MOM DEAD ON THE FLOOR.
BUT SHE CAN'T BE DEAD BECAUSE SHE'S ALREADY DEAD.

OVER AND OVER: YOU KILLED YOUR MOTHER.
YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A DAD. YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH PARENTS TO GO AROUND WASTING THEM LIKE THIS.

I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT THE WAY MY MOM SMELLED LIKE BURNT HAIR AND DIRT, ABOUT HOW HER VOICE SOUNDED.
IT WASN'T THE SWEET, SYRUPY TONE WITH THE HINT OF A SOUTHERN ACCENT SHE ALWAYS HAD, EVEN WHEN SHE WAS STICKING HER HEAD INTO A POT OF BOILING GRAVY TO AVOID BEING ARRESTED.
IT WAS OPPRESSIVE AND HARSH, LIKE THE SOUND IN YOUR HEAD BEFORE A PANIC ATTACK.

I'M THINKING ABOUT HOW I JUST PUT TWO BULLETS INTO THE FACE OF THE WOMAN WHO USED TO KISS MY FOREHEAD BEFORE I WENT TO SLEEP.
I'M THINKING ABOUT HOW I'M A KILLER, JUST LIKE SHE WAS, AND HOW MAYBE RIGHT NOW I COULD KILL ANYONE--EVERYONE--IN THE WORLD.
I'M THINKING ABOUT THE WEIGHT OF THAT GUN, AND THE WAY IT KICKED, AND WHETHER SUE ELLEN MYERS (THAT'S HER NAME) WILL KNOW IT WAS ME WHO SAVED HER LIFE.
KNOW IT WAS ME WHO ENDANGERED IT BY COMING TO HER SCHOOL AND BRINGING MY MOTHER'S ANGER DOWN ON HER LITTLE BLOND HEAD.
I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT THE FACT THAT THIS WOMAN, WHO I WATCHED DIE, SHOULDN'T BE OUT OF THE GROUND, BECAUSE THAT MAKES NO SENSE.
I'M JUST FEELING GUILTY AND HORRIBLE, LIKE I BETRAYED HER AFTER SHE COOKED ME ALL THOSE MEALS, AND BOUGHT ME THAT BARBIE, AND HUGGED ME WHEN MY DAD LEFT TO GET CIGARETTES AND NEVER CAME BACK.
I'M THINKING ABOUT HOW I HAVE TO GET HER HOME. I OWE HER AT LEAST THAT, AND RIGHT NOW, HOME IS A HOLE IN THE GROUND.
THEN, FOR A SECOND, THE SHOCK AND THE FEAR AND THE ANGER WEAR OFF, AND I'M JEALOUS...
BECAUSE MY MOM IS GOING HOME...
AND THAT'S SOMETHING...
I WILL NEVER DO...
AGAIN.


THIS IS NOT HOME.
CAAAASSSIE!


TIME FOR SCHOOL.
THIS IS THE HOME OF SHANNON AND KAREN MOORE. MY FOSTER PARENTS.
KAREN TALKS FAST AND RUNS SHORT WORDS INTO ONE BIG WORD AND MAKES REALLY GOOD MEATLOAF. SHE'S NICE AND GOOD AND DOES EVERYTHING SHE CAN TO HELP..
I HATE HER.

KAREN, DID YOU, UH, WASH MY OTHER UNIFORM?
OHYAGURE. STILL WARM FROM THE DRYER, I BET. LEMME GETITFORYA.
SHE SLEEPS SOUNDLY. EAR PLUGS IN HER EARS SO SHE DOESN'T HEAR SHANNON SNORE.

THANKS.
SHE DIDN'T HEAR ME COME IN AT FOUR.

JUST LIKE I SAID.
I HATE HER BECAUSE SHE ACTS AS IF SHE'S MY MOTHER. BUT SHE'S NOT MY MOTHER.
FOR A SECOND I WONDER WHAT MY LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE IF KAREN HAD BEEN MY MOM...
INSTEAD OF DELILAH HACK, WHO NEVER GOT OVER HER HUSBAND LEAVING HER.
WHO DID EVERYTHING SHE COULD TO KEEP HER DAUGHTER SAFE FROM THE EVILS OF THE WORLD.
SAFE FROM EVERYTHING EXCEPT HER.
MORNIN', CASS. YOU LOOK KINDA... TIRED.
SHANNON MOORE IS ALREADY AFRAID OF ME. NOT OF WHAT I REALLY AM. HE FEARS THE FACT THAT I'M A TEENAGE GIRL.
A MORTAL ARCHENEMY DESTINED TO SPURN HIS RULES AND SQUEAL ABOUT THINGS HE COULDN'T POSSIBLY FATHOM.
I JUST COULD NOT STOP READING ABOUT EDWARD AND BELLA. O-M-G, WHAT A ROMANCE.
IT KEEPS HIM FROM TRYING TO ACT LIKE MY FATHER.
I LIKE IT THAT WAY.
I DON'T WONDER WHAT IT'D BE LIKE IF SHANNON MOORE WAS MY DAD INSTEAD OF JACK HACK.
I JUST WONDER HOW AFRAID OF ME HE'D BE IF HE KNEW I'D SPENT THE PREVIOUS NIGHT THROWING WET DIRT ONTO A CORPSE, WATCHING WORMS FALL OUT OF THE GRAVE WALLS ONTO THE BODY.

AS SOON AS I STEP FOOT ONTO SCHOOL GROUNDS, I HEAR THE BUZZING: "THEY FOUND SUE ELLEN MYERS THIS MORNING."
"YEAH, IN ONE PIECE. AND IN THE CAFETERIA OF ALL PLACES!"
"SHE'S ALIVE? I WANTED HER SPOT ON CHEER SQUAD. LIKE, WHAT A DOWNER."
NO ONE KNOWS WHO KIDNAPPED HER. OR THAT I HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH HER RESCUE.
BUT THEY LOOK AT ME ACCUSINGLY ANYWAY. I'M THE NEW GIRL. THE ONE WHO LIVES WITH FOSTER PARENTS AND HAS GLASSES THAT WERE OUT OF FASHION FIVE YEARS AGO.
EVEN THE TEACHERS CAN TELL SOMETHING'S WRONG. THEIR HEIGHTENED SENSES, SO ATTUNED TO TEENAGERS, WARN THEM TO KEEP ME IN THEIR SIGHTS. NOT TO TURN THEIR BACKS.
ALL DAY I FEEL THE STARES. SO MUCH SO THAT AFTER A WHILE I FEEL LIKE I'M OUTSIDE MY OWN BODY, STARING RIGHT ALONG WITH THEM. ACCUSING MYSELF.
IT'S NOT UNTIL MY ELECTIVE GYM CLASS FIFTH PERIOD THAT I COME BACK TO MY OWN BODY.
HERE, MY BODY IS A VESSEL, A BLUNT OBJECT. AN UNTOUCHABLE, SPINY SHELL.

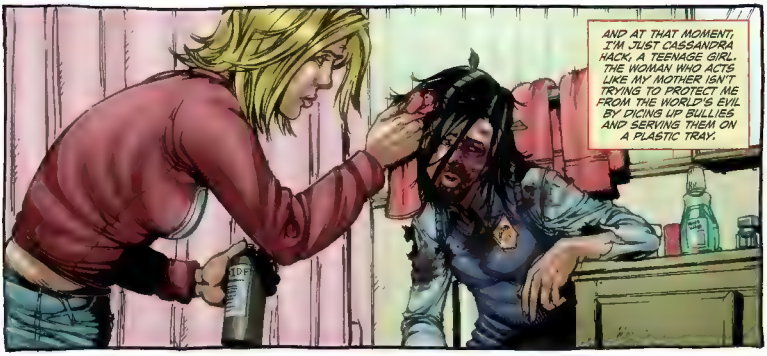
IN THE SHOWERS, MY ARMOR IS OFF AND I'M ON DISPLAY.
BRUISES I DIDN'T FEEL LAST NIGHT, HIGH ON FEAR AND ADRENALINE, BOIL TO THE SURFACE.
HERE, GIRLS BLESSED WITH BEAUTIFUL BODIES AND PERFECT SKIN CAST BARBED REMARKS TO THOSE LESS PERFECT. THE WEAKER. THEY DON'T WASTE WORDS ON ME.
IT'S NOT WEAKNESS THEY SENSE FROM ME...
IT'S AN OTHERNESS. A WRONGNESS.
YOU ALMOST CAN'T BLAME THEM FOR WHAT THEY'RE ABOUT TO DO.

THEY SAY THE USUAL THINGS: "CUNT." "BITCH." "SLUT." BUT IT'S NOT THE WORDS. IT'S THE WAY GIRLS SAY THINGS THAT MAKES THEM WEAPONS.
BUT THEY ALSO SAY THEY KNOW I HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANNE MARIE SAINT AND STEPHANIE GREY.
THEY KNOW IT. THEY JUST CAN'T PROVE IT. AND SO THEY RESORT TO WEAPONS OTHER THAN WORDS.
I COULD FIGHT BACK. BECOME A BLUNT OBJECT.
BUT I MIGHT KILL THEM.
AND I DESERVE THIS.

I'M IN A DAZE. DRIED UP AND DEPLETED LIKE THE EARTHWORMS THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT BACK INTO THE GROUND BEFORE THE SUN COOKED THEM.

THE NEW BRUISES DON'T HOLD OFF THEIR DEBUT LIKE THE ONES FROM LAST NIGHT, AND THE DULL BUZZ IN MY HEAD MAKES EVERYTHING SEEM LIKE I'M REMEMBERING IT FROM SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE INSTEAD OF LIVING IT.

KAREN DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING, BUT AS SHE GRABS ME I LET MYSELF THINK THAT MAYBE I IMAGINED IT...
MAYBE LAST NIGHT WAS JUST A COLLECTION OF NIGHTMARE IMAGES, HALF-REMEMBERED AND FADING.


AND AT THAT MOMENT, I'M JUST CASSANDRA HACK, A TEENAGE GIRL. THE WOMAN WHO ACTS LIKE MY MOTHER ISN'T TRYING TO PROTECT ME FROM THE WORLD'S EVIL BY DICING UP BULLIES AND SERVING THEM ON A PLASTIC TRAY.

WHEN SHANNON COMES HOME, WE SIT ON THE COUCH AND WATCH A SAPPY MOVIE. HE LETS ME LEAN ON HIM, AND HE DOESN'T SEEM AFRAID AT ALL.
WE'RE NOT MORTAL ENEMIES RIGHT NOW. I'M NOT AN "OTHER" AND I'M NOT "WRONG."
MY THOUGHTS SLOW DOWN. QUIET. SILENT.
SAVE ONE SENTENCE:
"YOU'VE COME HOME."

Killer
DELILAH HACK WAS DEAD. BUT DEATH DIDN'T STOP HER.
MAYBE MY MOM WAS UNIQUE--A WOMAN WHO DUG HER WAY OUT OF HER OWN COFFIN SO SHE COULD CONTINUE WHAT SHE'D BEGUN IN LIFE.
STORIES ABOUT RETURNING FROM THE DEAD ARE AS OLD AS THE HUMAN RACE.
VAMPIRES
GHOSTS
MAYBE THEY HELP PEOPLE DEAL WITH THE FEAR OF DEATH, THE TERROR AT THE THOUGHT OF ROTTING, AND RETURNING TO THE EARTH; AND LEAVING NO PROOF YOU EVER EXISTED.
THE BIBLE SAYS JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS AND RETURNED TO SHOW HIS LOVE.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO DIED FOR THEIR OWN SINS AND RETURN TO SHOW THEIR HATE?

MANCHESTER, IOWA.
WHAT ABOUT THE ONES WHO DIDN'T ROT AND WERE UNABLE EVEN TO MOVE ON TO HELL?
MAYBE THEIR TORMENT IS KNOWING THAT, DESPITE THEIR BEST EFFORTS, PEOPLE STILL LIVE.
LIFE IS STILL LONG AND HARD, OR SHORT AND JOYOUS.
WATCH OUT FOR FARMER FIG.
EITHER WAY, IT'S DICTATED BY A COMPLEX WEB OF DESIRES AND NEEDS AND THOUGHTS AND IMPULSES.
THE YOUNG STILL BELIEVE THEY'RE IMMORTAL...

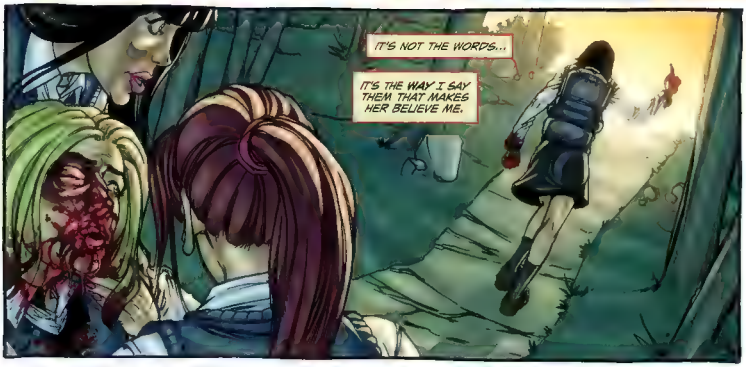
AND DEATH, THOUGH IT'S ALWAYS LURKING NEARBY, IS THE FURTHEST THING FROM THEIR MINDS.

CAAAASSSIE!
TIME FOR SCHOOL.
I FEEL LIKE SOMEONE ELSE.
AS SOON AS I STEP FOOT ONTO SCHOOL GROUNDS, I HEAR THE BUZZING. I FEEL THE STARES.
"I HEAR RHIANNA STEGMAN KICKED HER ASS YESTERDAY."
"RHIANNA SAYS SHE KNOWS THE NEWBIE KILLED ANNE MARIE."
"SAINT'S DEAD FOR SURE? I WANTED HER SPOT ON CHEER SQUAD. LIKE, AWESOME."
BUT NOW I DON'T MIND. I'M A BLUNT WEAPON.
TODAY THE BRUISES ARE MY ARMOR.

IT'S NOT WEAKNESS THEY SENSE FROM ME. IT'S AN OTHERNESS. A WRONGNESS...
AND I CAN USE THAT.
ARE YOU GONNA TELL US WHAT YOU DID WITH ANNE MARIE, YOU LITTLE WHORE...
OR IS EVERY DAY GOING TO BE LIKE YESTERDAY?
I DESERVE THIS.
I HIT HER FAST AND HARD. HER FRIENDS ARE TOO SURPRISED OR SCARED TO EVEN HELP.

AND WHEN SHE'S DOWN, I USE THAT OTHER WEAPON ON HER.

IF YOU EVER TOUCH ME AGAIN, I'LL FUCKING KILL YOU...
AND THEY WILL NEVER FIND YOUR BODY.


IT'S NOT THE WORDS...
IT'S THE WAY I SAY THEM THAT MAKES HER BELIEVE ME.

THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE MY MOM.
OR, AT LEAST, STORIES ABOUT THEM:
A MAN WHO KILLS IN DREAMS IN OHIO...
A MASKED MANIAC WHO TERRORIZES A SMALL TOWN ON HALLOWEEN...
A CAMP PLAGUED FOR THIRTY YEARS BY A PSYCHO WHO WON'T DIE.

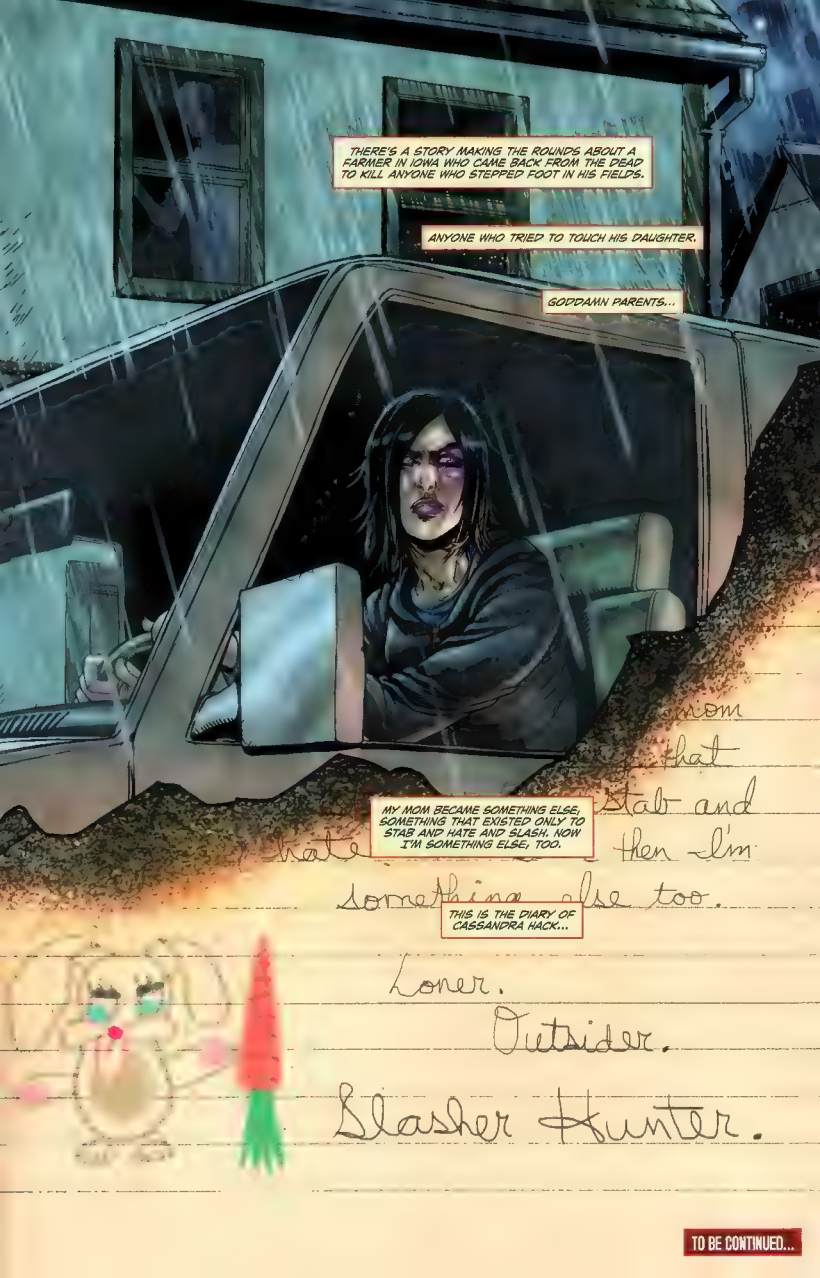
THEY MIGHT JUST BE STORIES. SLEAZY TALES OF MURDER AND SEX TO EXCITE BORED TEENAGERS. THEY MIGHT JUST BE MODERN-DAY MORALITY TALES...
BUT MAYBE NOT.

THAT NIGHT, I SPEND TIME WITH KAREN AND SHANNON.
SHANNON MAKES FUN OF KAREN FOR THE WAY SHE ALWAYS MANAGES TO WALK INTO A ROOM JUST AFTER HE'S DUCKED INTO IT TO FART.
KAREN DOES A SPIT TAKE WHEN HE DOES AN IMPRESSION OF HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW. AN HONEST-TO-GOODNESS SPIT TAKE.
THEY'RE BOTH NICE AND GOOD--AND HUMAN. WITH THEM I COULD HAVE WHAT I NEVER HAD BEFORE.
THAT ONLY MAKES WHAT I HAVE TO DO EVEN HARDER.

SNNNRRRRKK.
SNNR
SNNNRRRK
SNNNNR.
HUK.
SNRT.
SHANNON.
JNGH?
C-CASSIE?
YEAH, "DADDY."
DON'T TALK, AND DON'T MOVE TOO FAST.
YOU'VE GOT A REALLY SHARP KNIFE ABOUT A HALF A CENTIMETER FROM YOUR JUGULAR.

KAREN IS FINE.
AS LONG AS WE DON'T WAKE HER, SHE DOESN'T NEED TO BE INVOLVED.
HERE'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE:
I'M LEAVING. I'M NEVER COMING BACK. I DON'T WANT TO BE FOLLOWED.
YOU'LL TELL HUMAN SERVICES THAT I MUST HAVE SNUCK OUT, THAT I LEFT NO CLUE WHERE I WAS GOING.
YOU WON'T LOOK FOR ME. YOU WON'T HELP ANYONE LOOK FOR ME.
YOU WILL REMEMBER ME THIS WAY:
A DANGEROUS, PSYCHOTIC LITTLE BITCH.
IF YOU DO NOT FOLLOW MY RULES...
SHUNK

THERE ARE OTHER KILLERS LIKE MY MOM OUT THERE.
I KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR. I CAN FIND THEM.
I CAN KILL THEM.
I DID IT ONCE ALREADY.
SO I SWITCH THE PLATES WITH MY MOM'S OLD CAR.
SHANNON'S FEAR WILL KEEP HIM FROM FOLLOWING ME. THAT'S IMPORTANT.
IF I'M GOING TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO ALL OF THOSE REVENGE-OBSESSED KILLERS, I CAN'T HAVE BYSTANDERS.
FAMILY.
COLLATERAL.
EVERYONE NEEDS TO FEAR ME.
THEY NEED TO WATCH THEIR BACKS AROUND ME, AND TALK ABOUT ME IN FRIGHTENED WHISPERS, AND NEVER WANT TO MAKE ME A PART OF THEIR HOMES.
HOME IS A PLACE I WILL NEVER HAVE AGAIN.


THERE'S A STORY MAKING THE ROUNDS ABOUT A FARMER IN IOWA WHO CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD TO KILL ANYONE WHO STEPPED FOOT IN HIS FIELDS.
ANYONE WHO TRIED TO TOUCH HIS DAUGHTER.
GODDAMN PARENTS...
MY MOM BECAME SOMETHING ELSE, SOMETHING THAT EXISTED ONLY TO STAB AND HATE AND SLASH. NOW I'M SOMETHING ELSE, TOO.
THIS IS THE DIARY OF CASSANDRA HACK...
Loner.
Outsider.
Slasher Hunter.
TO BE CONTINUED...

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MY FIRST MANIAC
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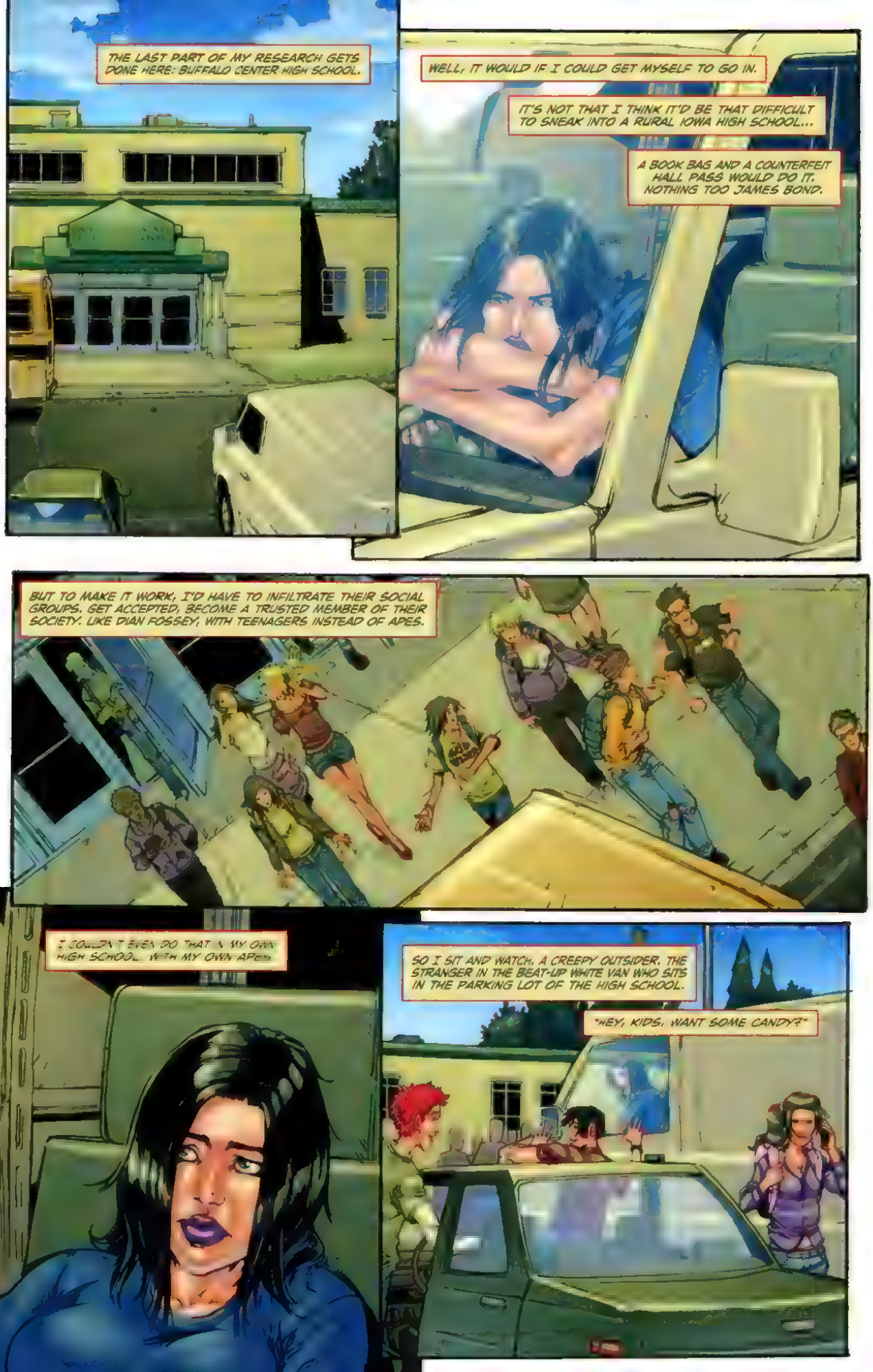
AIIIIEEEE!!
WHO WILL SAVE ME...
...FROM THIS RADIOACTIVE MONSTROSITY?!
THE BEAST FROM GROUND ZERO WILL RETURN AFTER THESE MESSAGES.
MY MOM TOOK ME FOR KARATE LESSONS WHEN I WAS NINE. SHE THOUGHT IT MIGHT HELP ME PROTECT MYSELF WHEN SHE WASN'T THERE TO DO IT.
THE LESSONS STOPPED SUDDENLY. SHE DECIDED TO GET ME ACTIVE IN THE CHURCH INSTEAD.
I FIGURED IT WAS BECAUSE KARATE WAS EXPENSIVE, BUT CHURCH WAS FREE.
SHE SAID KARATE WOULD PROTECT MY BODY, BUT CHURCH WOULD PROTECT MY SOUL.

MY SOUL
PEOPLE JOIN A RELIGION THEY GO TO WORSHIP
THEY FOLLOW RULES WRITTEN DOWN IN BOOKS THAT ARE THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD.
RULES LIKE: BE GOOD TO YOUR NEIGHBOR (UNLESS HE HAS A DIFFERENT RELIGION). DON'T TOUCH THIS, DON'T HAVE SEX WITH THAT. DON'T THINK THIS, DON'T EVER SAY THAT. DON'T ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS. THAT'S THE BIG ONE, BECAUSE THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE IS: HAVE FAITH.
ALL THAT BECAUSE NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOUR HEART STOPS BEATING AND YOUR EYES CLOSE FOREVER.
NO ONE, THAT IS, EXCEPT ME.
WHAT RULES DO I FOLLOW?
WHAT DO I HAVE FAITH IN NOW?

I PUT MY FAITH IN THE ONLY THING I HAVE LEFT: MY MISSION.
MY MOM LEFT ME SOME MONEY WHEN SHE DIED (THE FIRST TIME AROUND), BUT MOST OF THAT'S GONE. SO I TOOK A PART-TIME JOB.
WORKING AS A BAR-BACK AT A TEEN DANCE CLUB IS ITS OWN KIND OF TORTURE
BUT THE MORE I LEARN ABOUT "SLASHERS," THE MORE I SEE THIS WEIRD CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM AND TEENAGERS, ESPECIALLY THE KIND WHO PARTAKE IN "DEBAUCHED BEHAVIOR."
SO BEING HERE IS NOT JUST ABOUT INCOME
IT'S RESEARCH

I DO MORE RESEARCH HERE.
THE OLD FIG FARM.
THE STORY SAYS FARMER FIG WAS SOME STRICT OLD GUY WITH A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, WHO HE NEVER LET LEAVE THE HOUSE.
OF COURSE, ALL THE LOCAL BOYS KNEW ABOUT JENNY FIG ANYWAY.
IT BECAME A GAME. THE BOYS WOULD SNEAK ONTO THE FIG FARM TO GET A LOOK AT JENNY, THEN RUN OFF, LAUGHING, AS AN ANGRY FARMER FIG CHASED THEM.
ONE DAY, A FEW OF THE BOYS GOT BRAVER, AND JENNY FIG INVITED THEM INTO THE BARN. TWO OF THEM KEPT AN EYE OUT FOR FARMER FIG WHILE ONE OF THE BOYS--WELL, "PLOWED JENNY'S FIELDS," YOU MIGHT SAY.
BUT OL' FIG HAD GROWN SICK OF ALL THE BOYS TRESPASSING ON HIS PROPERTY AND LUSTING AFTER HIS DAUGHTER.
HE'D SET A TRAP FOR THEM, USING JENNY AS BAIT.
AND THEY GOT "FORKED."

FIG PUT THE KIDS UP LIKE SCARECROWS TO WARN EVERYONE ELSE THAT HIS LAND AND HIS DAUGHTER, WERE OFF LIMITS. THIS DIDN'T SIT WELL WITH THE LOCALS.
BEFORE YOU COULD SAY "CIVILIAN JUSTICE," A LYNCH MOB WAS HEADED TOWARD THE FARM.
BUT FIG SAVED 'EM THE TROUBLE. PRETTY QUICK, HE AND HIS DAUGHTER WERE DANCING THE HANGMAN'S JIG.
THE STORIES SAY FIG IS STILL HERE, PROWLING HIS CORNFIELDS, RUNNING A PITCHFORK THROUGH TRESPASSERS, HIS DAUGHTER NEVER FAR FROM HIS SIGHT. SEVERAL MYSTERIOUS DEATHS HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO HIM.
SLAUGHTERED TEENS. OVERPROTECTIVE PARENT. THE DEAD WALKING.
YOU CAN PROBABLY SEE WHAT ATTRACTED ME TO THIS ONE.


THE LAST PART OF MY RESEARCH GETS DONE HERE: BUFFALO CENTER HIGH SCHOOL.
WELL, IT WOULD IF I COULD GET MYSELF TO GO IN.
IT'S NOT THAT I THINK IT'D BE THAT DIFFICULT TO SNEAK INTO A RURAL IOWA HIGH SCHOOL...
A BOOK BAG AND A COUNTERFEIT HALL PASS WOULD DO IT. NOTHING TOO JAMES BOND.
BUT TO MAKE IT WORK, I'D HAVE TO INFILTRATE THEIR SOCIAL GROUPS. GET ACCEPTED, BECOME A TRUSTED MEMBER OF THEIR SOCIETY. LIKE DIAN FOSSEY, WITH TEENAGERS INSTEAD OF APES.
I COULDN'T EVEN DO THAT A MY OWN HIGH SCHOOL. WITH MY OWN APES.
SO I SIT AND WATCH. A CREEPY OUTSIDER. THE STRANGER IN THE BEAT-UP WHITE VAN WHO SITS IN THE PARKING LOT OF THE HIGH SCHOOL.
"HEY, KIDS. WANT SOME CANDY?"

QUEER FEAR
WHAT IF I FIND OUT THAT I'M WRONG? WHAT IF THERE ARE NO SLASHERS...?
WHAT IF I'M JUST A CRAZY GIRL WHO DROPPED OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL TO WORK AT A STRIP-MALL DANCE CLUB?
I GUESS I JUST HAVE TO KEEP THE FAITH. BESIDES, NO ONE IS THAT CRAZY.
ME ALONE, YOU ASSHOLES
ASSHOLES, HUH? I HEAR THAT'S WHAT YOU LIKE, QUEER.
IS THAT WHY YOU CAME TO THE FUZZ?
GONNA PICK UP A GUY?
I WAS HERE TO BE WITH FRIENDS, JUST LIKE YOU GUYS OKAY? NOW I JUST WANT TO GO--
YOU HAVEN'T GOT ANY FRIENDS HERE, FAG.
WE DON'T WANT YOU GETTING GAY ALL OVER THE PLACE WE HANG OUT.
YOU'VE ALREADY GOT GAY ALL OVER YOU, YOU SELF-HATING--
SHUT THE FUCK UP FAG!
--!
CRACK

OH GOD I SHOULD DO SOMETHING
I KNOW I CAN FIGHT NOW I KNOW I CAN WIN
BUT THIS ISN'T PART OF MY MISSION I'M NOT A HERO
I'M A HUNTER..
AND THIS IS MY PREY.

GHAH!
KNOCK IT OFF!
AH! B*TCH!
NOW, YOU GUYS ARE SO TOUGH. WAY TO PROVE YOUR MASCULINITY.
FUCK'N FAG HAG
FWAP
YOU TH!NK JUST CUZ I'M !N IOWA I DON'T CARRY?
GHAHK!
KRAK

AHHH
PKOW PKOW
AAAHH MY ARM
YOU BROKE MY FUCKING ARM!!
COME ON, LUDO. I'LL GET YOU TO THE HOSPITAL.
OH MY GOD. IT HURTS, JAY!!
IT HURTS!!
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT THE NEXT TIME WE SEE YOU YOU'RE DEAD.
I CAN SEE MY BONE!!
AHUNHUNH
YOU OKAY MAN? DO YOU NEED TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL?
I DON'T KNOW. I'M KINDA DIZZY
HEY, THANKS. I'M SARAH.
OH, UNH... CASSIE.
SO, CASSIE, THAT'S MY TRUCK THAT JUST GOT SHOT.
YOU MIND GIVING US ALL A RIDE?

YOU THINK HE'LL BE OKAY?
YEAH, HE WAS FINE. YOU KNOW WHAT DRAMA QUEENS GAY GUYS CAN BE.
SO, YOU GO TO BUFFALO CENTER?
OH, UM... YEAH.
DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN YOU AROUND SCHOOL.
I JUST MOVED. LAST WEEK.
EAU CLAIRE
CHIPPEWA FALLS WISCONSIN.
IN OTHER WORDS, A PLACE EQUALLY AS SHITTY AS BUFFALO CENTER.
YEAH PRETTY MUCH.
GOOD. YOU CAN'T BE COOLER THAN ME IF WE'RE FRIENDS
IS THAT YOUR BOYFRIEND?
KELSEY? I GUESS. ACCORDING TO HIM ANYWAY.
HE SEEMS PRETTY COOL. HE HELPED THAT KID WITHOUT ANY HESITATION AT ALL.
YEAH. A BIG, POPULAR JOCK, YET HE'S ONE OF THE GENUINELY NICEST GUYS AROUND.
KINDA MAKES YA SICK, DOESN'T IT?

YOU WORK AT FUZZ?
YEAH.
HAHAH. JESUS...THAT'S FUNNY.
IT IS?
HA, SORRY. I MEAN, CLUB FUZZ IS THE KIND OF PLACE THOSE TWO BRAIN-DEAD WANKSTAS HANG OUT.
BUT YOU WERE THERE.
I KNOW, I KNOW. BUT GOING THERE BECAUSE IT'S WHERE YOUR SPORTY BOY TOY LIKES TO HANG OUT IS DIFFERENT FROM WORKING IN THAT LITTLE PIECE OF HELL.
YOU JUST DON'T SEEM THE TYPE.
OH? WHAT KIND OF TYPE DO I SEEM LIKE?
BEING THE JUDGMENTAL LITTLE BITCH I AM, I USUALLY EXCEL AT PIGEONHOLING.
BUT WITH YOU... HMMM. .
ANYWAY, THIS IS US.
FOURTH PERIOD, BY THE COKE MACHINE. MEET ME FOR LUNCH TOMORROW, OKAY?
OH, YEAH. I'LL BE THERE...
. .THE DAY AFTER FUCKING NEVER

LATER.
REMEMBER WHEN YOU'D TALK TO YOUR BUNNY
REMEMBER HOW YOU'D CRY TO MR PINK?

SO LONELY. DON'T YOU WISH YOU STILL HAD MR. PINK, CASSIE?
HUH?
DON'T YOU WISH YOU HAD SOMEONE TO CRY TO?
NO ONE TO CRY TO NOW.
ALL... ALONE.
HUNH!!

HEY, CASSIE. UH...WHO TOLD YOU WE WORE UNIFORMS AT THIS SCHOOL?
IT'S, UH, FROM MY LAST SCHOOL. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE OKAY.
HEY SARAH.
I GET IT. KINDA JAPANESE SCHOOLGIRL/GOTH LOLITA.
OH YEAH. TOTALLY.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT, DO YOU?
NOT EVEN A LITTLE.
TODAY, WE LUNCH.
TONIGHT, WE TAKE YOU SHOPPING.

JAY! JAY! WAIT UP!
MAN, YOU GOT TO SLOW DOWN. I'M DISABLED REMEMBER?
YOU AIN'T DISABLED. YOU GOT YOUR ASS KICKED BY A CHICK.
WHATEVER, MAN. YOUR DUMB ASS HAS US LOST.
SHIT, THERE PROBABLY ISN'T EVEN A PARTY OUT HERE TONIGHT.
TRUST ME. THIS PARTY IS GONNA BE OFF THE HOOK.
I GOT AN INVITE THROUGH FACESPACE. SAID TO COME TO THIS SIDE OF THE FARM.
OH, WELL, A FACESPACE INVITE.
OF COURSE IT'S FUCKING LEGIT.
HEY... WHAT'S THAT?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I SAW SOMEBODY OVER THERE.

WHAT THE HELL?
HUH. NEVER NOTICED THIS BEFORE.
MAN, YOU DIDN'T SEE ANYBODY
NO. I SAW A PERSON I THINK HE WENT IN THERE.
HELLO? HEY, FAGS THIS SHIT AIN'T FUNNY
WOAH. CHECK THIS OUT.
THE WHOLE SHACK'S FULL OF OLD ASS VIDEO GAMES.
HEY LOOK AT ME.
I'M A CHAMPION AT JUMPIN' OVER BARRELS.
OLD VIDEO GAMES ARE SO GAY.
WHAT THE HELL'S THIS...?
I DUNNO. HERE TAKE THE LIGHT.

Hurk Hurk.
I'm gonna get hammered!
Beware of GRINFACE!
BUBBA
Bubba Bubba
WHAT'S WEIRD
I DON'T THINK THIS THING'S EVEN PLUGGED--
DUDE WHAT THE FUCK...?
1000 BONUS

SQUAAALA
AAHHHH!! MOTHERFUCK!!
AAAHHHHHH!
DUDE! IT'S JUST A BIRD
GET AWAY! GET AWAY!
HEY, WAIT. WHERE'D YOU DROP THE FUCKING LIGHT?
HUH HUH
FUK
SLCH

THIS AIN'T FUNNY!
WHERE THE FUCK ARE YOU?
JAAAAY!!

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FARM.
PAY ATTENTION, GUYS QUEEN SARAH SPEAKS!
THIS IS MY FRIEND CASSIE. SHE'S NEW--AND HOT.
TREAT HER NICE, OKAY, OR I'LL KICK YOUR ASSES.
UH
SO SARAH'S GOT A NEW PET PROJECT, HUH?
NAH, MAN, CASSIE'S COOL.
WHATEVER, MAN. YOU JUST LIKE THE FREAKY CHICKS--
AHH!
HAHA, BLAKE, YOU'RE SUCH A BAD ASS.
HEY, FUCK YOU KELSEY

1000 BONUS
HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW IT WAS JUST A SCARECROW?

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COVER A
HACK/SLASH
My First Maniac

IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS:

HACK/SLASH™

My First Maniac

BEFORE SHE TRAVELED THE WORLD WITH HER MONSTROUS PARTNER VLAD, HUNTING DOWN AND *DESTROYING* SLASHERS, *CASSIE HACK* WAS THE LONE SURVIVOR OF AN ATTACK BY A SLASHER CALLED THE *LUNCH LADY*... A SLASHER THAT HAPPENED TO BE HER MOTHER!

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MANCHESTER, IOWA.
CLUB FUZZ.
ALL THESE TEENAGERS.
EACH OF THEM AN INDIVIDUAL WITH A UNIQUE LIFE, SINGULAR EXPERIENCES, AND A DISTINCTIVE VIEWPOINT.
EACH OF THEM DOING HIS OR HER BEST TO HIDE THAT INDIVIDUALITY BY WEARING THE PREDESIGNED MASK OF SOME DESIGNATED SUBGROUP: JOCKS, PUNKS, GEARHEADS, BURNOUTS. STANDING OUT BY BLENDING IN.
AND ME, WATCHING THEM, LEARNING THEIR WAYS, STUDYING THEIR LIVES, SO I CAN BLEND IN, TOO, BECAUSE THAT WILL HELP ME BE A BETTER HUNTER.
I LEARN THEIR WAYS. BECOME LIKE THEM. LET THE PREDATOR THINK I'M ITS PREY UNTIL IT'S MINE.
I'M NOT ONE OF THESE KIDS. I'M JUST UNDERCOVER. DEEP UNDERCOVER.

OOH! CUTE OUTFIT! WHERE'D YOU GET IT?
UH... MY FRIEND SARAH PICKED IT OUT.
WELL, YOU LOOK HOT!
OH... UHM... THANKS.
HACK! MOVE THAT ASS.
THE LITTLE A-D-H-D SHITS NEED THEIR LIQUID RITALIN.
ALL THESE TEENS ARE UNDERCOVER IN THEIR OWN WAY. AT A CERTAIN POINT, THEY FORGET WHERE THE MASK ENDS AND THEY BEGIN.
MISSING
MISSING
MAYBE THAT'S HAPPENING TO ME. THE GIRL I AM HERE, IN MANCHESTER, DRESSES FASHIONABLY. SHE HAS FRIENDS. SHE GOES TO PARTIES. SHE DOESN'T GET BEAT UP. SHE NEVER HAD A CRAZY MOM WHO COOKED HER CLASSMATES.
FOR YEARS, BEING LIKED AND ACCEPTED WAS MY ELUSIVE PREY.
HEY CASSIE
GET IN B*TCH.
IT'S PARTY TIME
SO I WONDER: WHICH HUNT AM I STILL ON?

THIS IS WHERE MOST WEEKEND NIGHTS END UP. THE OL' FIG FARM. ABANDONED. POSSESSED OF A DARK PAST. THE MIX OF SEX AND DEATH THAT TEENS LOVE SO MUCH.
WAIT, YOU GO TO BUFFALO CENTER?
YEAH I'M NEW.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND. WHO DO YOU HAVE FOR CHEM?
UM, I'M IN A SPECIAL CLASS WITH A ONE-ON-ONE TUTOR.
YEAH, SHE ISN'T IN ANY OF MY CLASSES EITHER. SOMETIMES I SWEAR SHE JUST COMES TO SCHOOL FOR LUNCH.
SARAH! YOUR TURN FOR A KEG STAND!
GOTTA GO. SOME FRESHMAN BITCH BEAT MY RECORD.
CASSIE, KEEP AN EYE ON MY HOT PIECE OF MAN-MEAT AND SEE THAT HE STAYS OUT OF TROUBLE, WOULD YOU?
OH YEAH, SURE.
ALL RIGHT, MAN-MEAT, DON'T STRAY TOO FAR.
I KNOW RIGHT?
JUST ONCE I WOULD *LOVE* TO BE CALLED SOMETHING SIMPLE LIKE "BOYFRIEND."

WE GOT BACON!!
COPS!
SHIT, MAN. THIS IS STRIKE THREE IF I GET CAUGHT!
NO WAY AM I GOIN TO DUMDUM SCHOOL
WHAT DO WE DO?
THE COPS WILL CIRCLE THE FARM. HEAD ACROSS THE STREET. THERE'S A BIG-ASS WOODS OVER THERE.
WHAT ABOUT SARAH?
I'LL CALL HER.
WATCH OUT, SPORTSFAN!
SHUNFE
SHIT, ARE YOU OKAY?
THAT WAS, LIKE, A TWO-TON GOTHOPOTAMUS.
CRAP. MY PHONE... I DROPPED IT!
HEY YOU KIDS HOLD IT!
SCREW THE PHONE! SARAH TOLD ME TO KEEP YOUR ASS OUT OF TROUBLE.

SERIOUSLY, ANNE, THIS IS THE LAST TIME I FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE.
FUCK YOU, DEE. HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW?
EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT YOU NEVER RUN TO THE CORNFIELD WHEN THE COPS BUST UP A PARTY.
OH, COME ON. DON'T TELL ME YOU BELIEVE THAT FARMER PIG STUFF
NO, YOU NEVER RUN TO THE CORNFIELD BECAUSE THE GROUND IS COVERED IN MUD AND CROW SHIT...
...WHICH WILL COMPLETELY DESTROY THE SIX-HUNDRED-DOLLAR PAIR OF SHOES YOU WORE...
...TO PROVE TO THAT BITCH MELISSA SCHWARTZ THAT YOU ARE NOT, LIKE, TOTALLY POOR
JEEZ. SORRY
EVERY TIME SOME HALF-DIGESTED CORN SQUEEZES THROUGH MY TOES I DIE A LITTLE INSIDE, ANNE.
I SAID I WAS SORRY
NO, MATTHEW.
"NOW IS NOT A GOOD TIME TO BEAT YOUR HIGH SCORE."

YOU THINK SARAH GOT AWAY OKAY?
I KNOW SHE DID.
HEY, GIVE HER A CALL. SHE CAN PICK US UP ON THE OTHER SIDE.
I... UH. I DON'T HAVE A CELL PHONE.
YOU DON'T HAVE A CELL PHONE?
DID YOU MOVE HERE FROM MIDDLE-EARTH?
I-- I KNOW I SHOULD GET ONE.
I NEVER HAD ONE AS A KID CUZ MY MOM WOULDN'T--
ACTUALLY, LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT MY MOM...
AND NOW I TOTALLY GET IT.

HOW DO YOU MEAN?
YOU CAME HERE OUT OF NOWHERE.
YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT YOUR PAST.
AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, YOU DON'T ACTUALLY GO TO OUR SCHOOL.
YOU LIVE IN A HOTEL...
BUT SARAH TOOK TO YOU RIGHT AWAY.
SHE DOESN'T DO THAT--I MEAN, LIKE, EVER.
HELL, WE'VE BEEN DATING FOR A FEW MONTHS AND I DON'T THINK SHE THINKS OF ME LIKE THAT.
DOES IT BOTHER YOU THAT SARAH TREATS YOU .. Y'KNOW.
LIKE A "BACK UP"?
I WAS GOING TO SAY "PET PEE-PEE," BUT YOURS IS BETTER.
SHE CAN TELL HERSELF WHATEVER SHE WANTS. BUT THE TRUTH IS, SHE ALWAYS COMES TO ME.
I KNOW THERE'S NO ONE ELSE.
45
BESIDES, I KIND OF LIKE IT. MOST GIRLS OUR AGE ARE SO BLATANT AND SHALLOW. SARAH...SHE...WELL, THERE'S SOMETHING VERY DEEP BEHIND THOSE EYES.
SOMETHING HURT, AND TORTURED, BUT STRONG AND RESILIENT.
I LIKE THAT.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY I TOOK TO YOU, TOO.

OH FUCK. IT'S MORNING ALREADY.
AND THERE'S CASA DE CASSIE.
JEEZ. THIS TOWN IS SO SMALL I'M PRETTY SURE YOU CAN FART ACROSS IT.
YOU CAN USE MY PHONE--OH... SORRY.
DON'T WORRY. I GREW UP WITH TWO OLDER SISTERS.
HMM. NO ANSWER.
I GUESS I'LL WALK BACK TO THE FARM AND FIND MY PHONE. PROBABLY BE ABLE TO CATCH SARAH BY THEN.
SHIT. IF I HADN'T LEFT MY VAN AT THE CLUB I COULD GIVE YOU A RIDE.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IT'S A NICE MORNING.
IT WAS GREAT TALKING TO YOU, CASSIE. YOU'RE A REALLY COOL GIRL.
CLICK
TODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER...
SOMEONE SAID I WAS COOL.

THERE YOU ARE--
SARAH?
KELSEY

WHEN I LOOK BACK AT WHAT I'VE WRITTEN, IT SEEMS LIKE I'M READING SOMEONE ELSE'S STORY.
LOCAL LEGEND. A CAMPFIRE STORY. LIKE THE TALE OF FARMER FIG.
AND WITH EACH TELLING THE TALE GETS MORE DISTORTED, FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH, FURTHER FROM REALITY.
MY MOM WAS THE LUNCH LADY.
SHE WENT BACK HOME TO HER HOLE IN THE GROUND.
AND GOING HOME IS SOMETHING I WILL NEVER DO.
NOT TO THAT HOME ANYWAY.
MAYBE I WAS SUPPOSED TO STAY WITH SHANNON AND KAREN...
MAYBE THIS TRIP CHASING A CAMPFIRE STORY IS ACTUALLY A CHANCE TO START OVER...
NEW TOWN. NEW LIFE. FRIENDS.
A NEW PLACE TO COME HOME TO.

THERE'S SOMEONE DOWN THERE. BEHIND THE CHURCH.
SOMEONE FAMILIAR.
HIS NAME IS LUMP OR LUNK--NO. LUDO. LIKE THE FUZZY THING IN LABYRINTH.
A WEEK AGO HE AND HIS FRIEND TRIED TO BEAT UP A KID IN THE FUZZ LOT.
IT'S BECAUSE OF HIM I MET SARAH AND KELSEY.
I'LL BET THOSE STAINS ON HIS IGNANT MIME SQUAD T-SHIRT AREN'T FINE RED WINE.
C'MON, MOTHERFU-- SORRY, JESUS. I'M TRYING TO STAY WITH YOU HERE, BUT I'M SO HUNGRY.
PLEASE, JUST A FEW LEFTOVER FRENCH FRIES.
BURGER
FISHING FOR FAST FOOD?
YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO IMPRESS A GIRL.

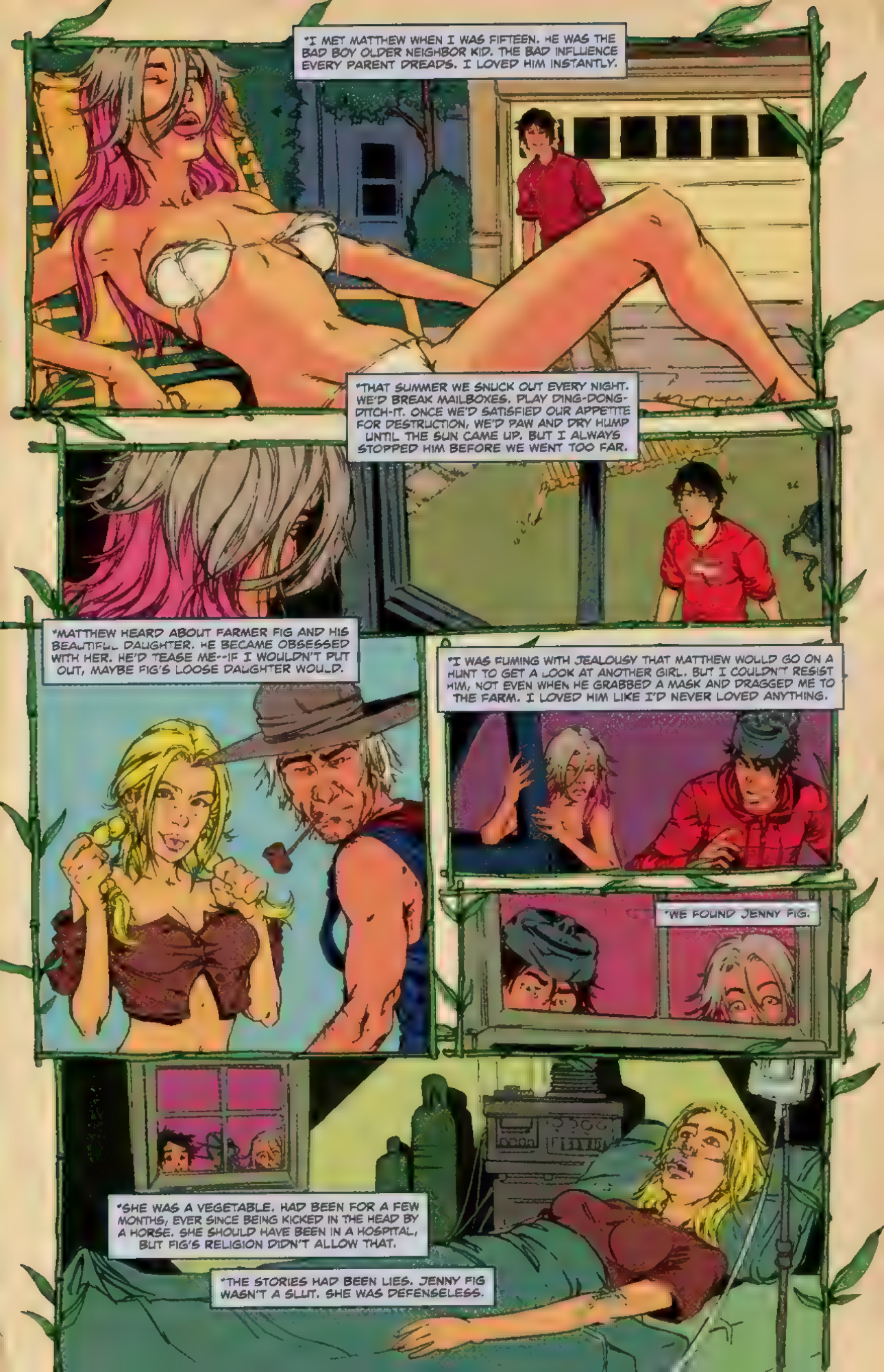
YOU WANT TO TELL ME WHY YOU LOOK LIKE YOU WENT TO PROM WITH CARRIE?
OH, FUCK. YOU.
GET OUT OF THE WAY! GOTTA STAY ON HOLY FUCKING GROUND!
PHUNF!
DEAR LORD JESUS, PLEASE PROTECT ME.
KEEP ME [redacted] HALLOWED GROUND FROM THE EVIL THAT PLAGUES MY ASS.
THE HELL--?!
YOU WANT TO TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON BEFORE I GIVE YOU A PAIR OF MATCHING ARMS?
I SAW THE DEVIL. THE DEVIL HIMSELF.
HE KILLED JAY. SMASHED HIS BRAINS IN, SMILING LIKE A LITTLE KID AT CHRISTMAS.
AND I JUST RAN.
THE DEVIL HAD ME IN SUCH A TRANCE I COULDN'T EVEN FIRE MY GUN.
I RAN AND NOW THE DEVIL'S COMIN' AFTER ME.
I'VE BEEN HIDING HERE, CUZ I KNOW ONLY HALLOWED GROUND WILL KEEP HIM FROM DOING TO ME WHAT HE DID TO JAY IN THAT CORNFIELD.
CORNFIELD?

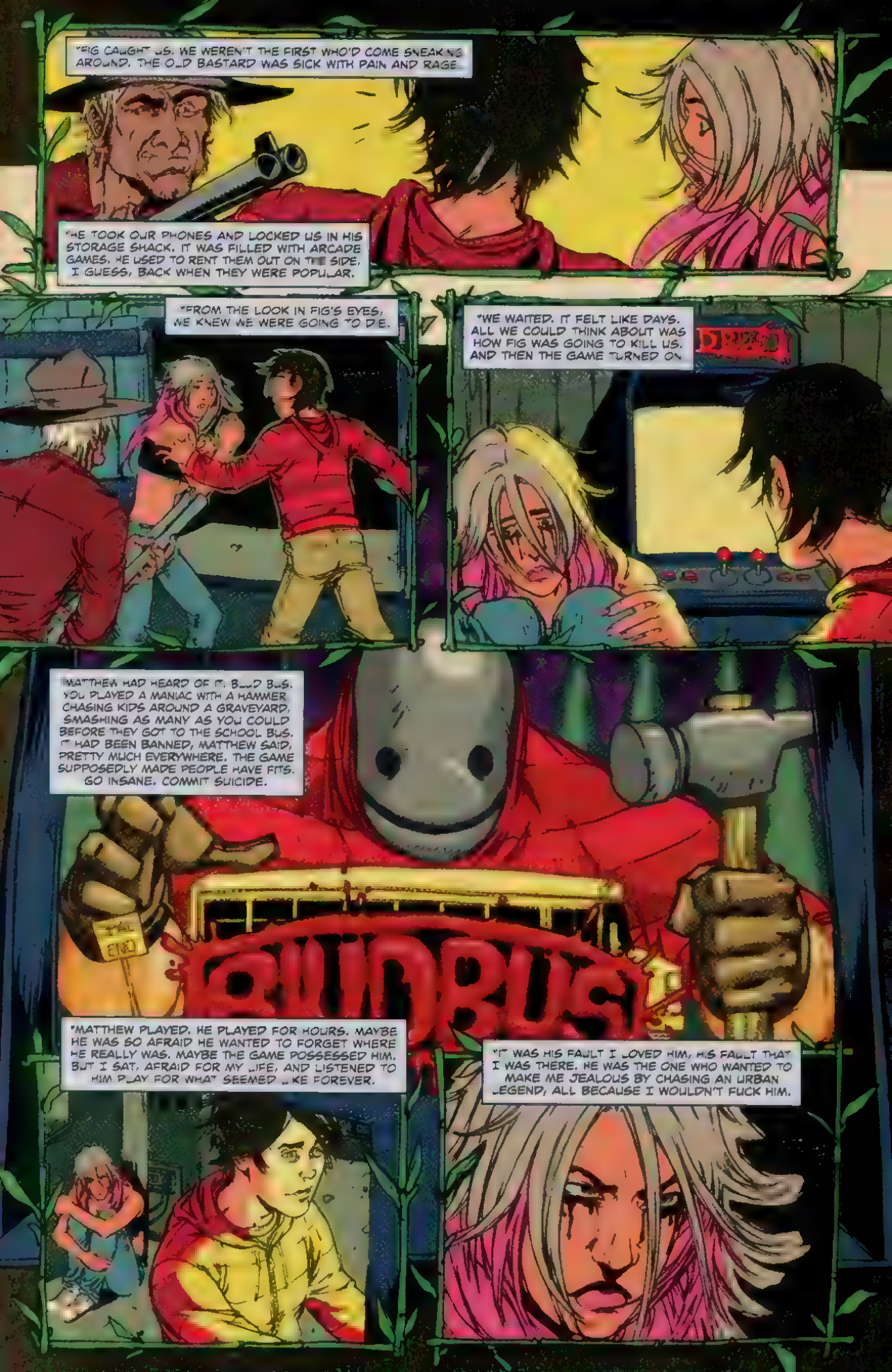
YOU HAD BETTER NOT BE FUCKING WITH ME.
NO! IT'S ALL TRUE!
THERE'S FEAR IN HIS EYES. IT'S REAL. IT'S THE KIND OF FEAR I'VE SEEN BEFORE.
WE WENT OUT TO FIG'S FARM.
THOUGHT THERE WAS GONNA BE A PARTY.
BUT IT WAS A TRAP.
THERE WAS A SHACK WITH OLD ARCADE GAMES AND A BLACK DEMON BIRD AND--
OH GOD, THE DEVIL SMASHED JAY'S HEAD AND TRIED TO BAPTIZE ME IN HIS BLOOD.
THE WORST PART WAS HE PUT A FUCKING POINT VALUE ON OUR SOULS. IT WAS ALL A GAME.
JUST A GAME
DRAW ME A MAP.
FIG'S FARM. ALL THOSE KIDS AT THE PARTY. SARAH--AND KELSEY. KELSEY WENT BACK THERE TO GET HIS PHONE.
ARE YOU CRAZY, BITCH? YOU CAN'T GO OUT THERE WITH JUST A BAT!
YOU'RE RIGHT.
GIVE ME YOUR GUN.

I CAME HERE LOOKING FOR ANSWERS. TRYING TO FIND OUT IF THERE WERE OTHERS LIKE MY MOM.
BUT I LET MYSELF GET PULLED INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES, PEOPLE WITH THE KIND OF LIVES I ALWAYS WANTED.
I WASN'T JUST DEEP UNDERCOVER ANYMORE. I GOT DUMB. COMFORTABLE. I WENT NATIVE.
I'M NOT A HUNTER. I'M JUST A STUPID, LONELY GIRL. INCOMPLETE. HALF FORMED. TORN APART.
SARAH.
THE OTHER HALF OF THE PHOTO WAS KELSEY
FARMER IS THE DEVIL
SOMEONE WANTS TO PLAY A GAME

HIGHEST
AND BY FORGETTING MY OWN RULES...
MATTHEW...
I MAY HAVE ALREADY LOST.
HEY, CASSIE.
SARAH! ARE YOU--?
KRAK

CRRAW?
CRRAW!
CASSIE
I'M SORRY I HAD TO DO THAT.
I THOUGHT YOU'D UNDERSTAND.
I DID. I JUST WASN'T SURE.
BUT I READ YOUR JOURNAL.
AND YOU GET IT. YOU KNOW.
WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

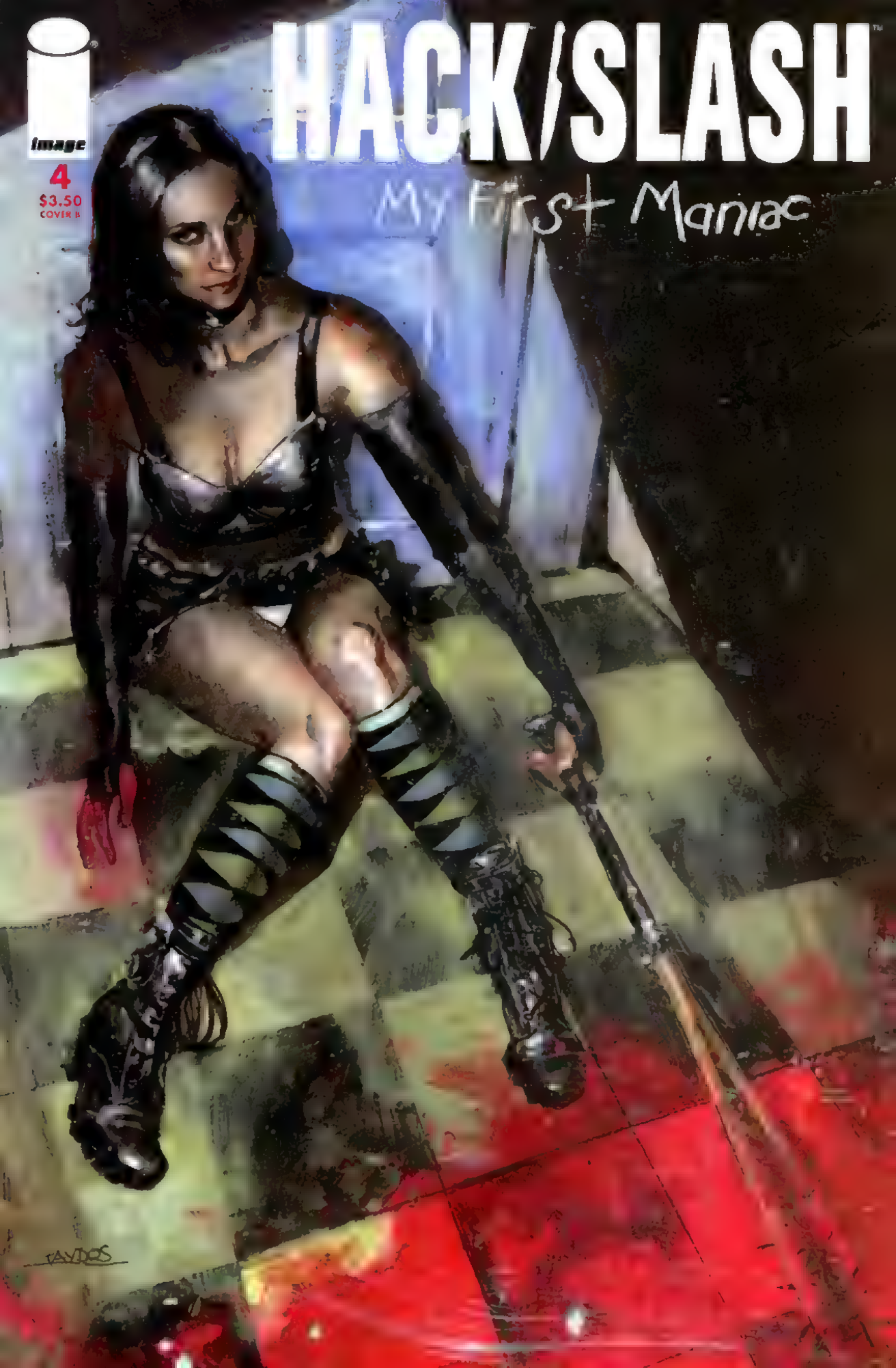

"I MET MATTHEW WHEN I WAS FIFTEEN. HE WAS THE BAD BOY OLDER NEIGHBOR KID. THE BAD INFLUENCE EVERY PARENT DREADS. I LOVED HIM INSTANTLY.
"THAT SUMMER WE SNUCK OUT EVERY NIGHT. WE'D BREAK MAILBOXES. PLAY DING-DONG-DITCH-IT. ONCE WE'D SATISFIED OUR APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION, WE'D PAW AND DRY HUMP UNTIL THE SUN CAME UP. BUT I ALWAYS STOPPED HIM BEFORE WE WENT TOO FAR.
"MATTHEW HEARD ABOUT FARMER FIG AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER. HE BECAME OBSESSED WITH HER. HE'D TEASE ME--IF I WOULDN'T PUT OUT, MAYBE FIG'S LOOSE DAUGHTER WOULD.
"I WAS FUMING WITH JEALOUSY THAT MATTHEW WOULD GO ON A HUNT TO GET A LOOK AT ANOTHER GIRL. BUT I COULDN'T RESIST HIM, NOT EVEN WHEN HE GRABBED A MASK AND DRAGGED ME TO THE FARM. I LOVED HIM LIKE I'D NEVER LOVED ANYTHING.
"WE FOUND JENNY FIG.
"SHE WAS A VEGETABLE. HAD BEEN FOR A FEW MONTHS, EVER SINCE BEING KICKED IN THE HEAD BY A HORSE. SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN A HOSPITAL, BUT FIG'S RELIGION DIDN'T ALLOW THAT.
"THE STORIES HAD BEEN LIES. JENNY FIG WASN'T A SLUT. SHE WAS DEFENSELESS.


"FIG CAUGHT US. WE WEREN'T THE FIRST WHO'D COME SNEAKING AROUND. THE OLD BASTARD WAS SICK WITH PAIN AND RAGE.
"HE TOOK OUR PHONES AND LOCKED US IN HIS STORAGE SHACK. IT WAS FILLED WITH ARCADE GAMES. HE USED TO RENT THEM OUT ON THE SIDE, I GUESS, BACK WHEN THEY WERE POPULAR.
"FROM THE LOOK IN FIG'S EYES, WE KNEW WE WERE GOING TO DIE.
"WE WAITED. IT FELT LIKE DAYS. ALL WE COULD THINK ABOUT WAS HOW FIG WAS GOING TO KILL US. AND THEN THE GAME TURNED ON
MATTHEW HAD HEARD OF IT. BLOOD BUS. YOU PLAYED A MANIAC WITH A HAMMER CHASING KIDS AROUND A GRAVEYARD, SMASHING AS MANY AS YOU COULD BEFORE THEY GOT TO THE SCHOOL BUS. IT HAD BEEN BANNED, MATTHEW SAID, PRETTY MUCH EVERYWHERE. THE GAME SUPPOSEDLY MADE PEOPLE HAVE FITS, GO INSANE, COMMIT SUICIDE.
BLOOD BUS
"MATTHEW PLAYED. HE PLAYED FOR HOURS. MAYBE HE WAS SO AFRAID HE WANTED TO FORGET WHERE HE REALLY WAS. MAYBE THE GAME POSSESSED HIM. BUT I SAT, AFRAID FOR MY LIFE, AND LISTENED TO HIM PLAY FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE FOREVER.
"IT WAS HIS FAULT I LOVED HIM, HIS FAULT THAT I WAS THERE. HE WAS THE ONE WHO WANTED TO MAKE ME JEALOUS BY CHASING AN URBAN LEGEND, ALL BECAUSE I WOULDN'T FUCK HIM.

"I SNAPPED.
"I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I SMASHED HIS FACE INTO THAT SCREEN. I JUST REMEMBER A WHITE-HOT FLASH OF RAGE AND THE SOUNDTRACK TO THAT STUPID FUCKING GAME.
"TURNS OUT THAT FIG CALMED DOWN AND DECIDED HE WAS GOING TO LET US GO. BUT THE DAMAGE WAS DONE.
"HE WAS MORE AFRAID THAN ME. WE BURIED MATTHEW IN THE CORNFIELD. I PROMISED NOT TO SAY A WORD.
"TO EVERYONE ELSE, I'D RUN AWAY TO DES MOINES FOR A FEW DAYS. IT TOOK A WHILE FOR ANYONE TO NOTICE MATTHEW WAS GONE. THEY ASSUMED HE'D RUN AWAY TOO, REBEL THAT HE WAS. BUT I KNEW WHERE HE WAS: ROTTING IN THE FIELD.
AT LEAST THAT'S WHERE HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN.
"HE WOULD STAND IN MY YARD, LOOKING UP AT THE WINDOW. HIS FACE WAS COVERED WITH A CROW-SKIN MASK, BUT THE EYES WERE THE SAME--MISCHIEVOUS, DARING. AT FIRST I WAS TERRIFIED. THEN I WAS CURIOUS.
"I FOLLOWED HIM BACK TO THE FARM HE'D KILLED FIG. HIS DAUGHTER, TOO. AND HE'D TURNED THE CORNFIELD INTO A MAZE LINED WITH BARBED WIRE AND NAILS.
"HE WANTED ME TO BRING HIM VICTIMS. KIDS TO CHASE AND KILL JUST LIKE GRINFACE DOES IN BLUD BUS. HE'D BECOME GRINFACE. MATTHEW HAD DIED AND COME BACK, AND HE THOUGHT HE WAS IN A VIDEO GAME.
"I STILL LOVED HIM AND I FELT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM. SO I BROUGHT MATTHEW VICTIMS. DRIFTERS AND HOMELESS PEOPLE MOSTLY, AT LEAST AT FIRST.

"I TRIED TO REMIND HIM OF HIS OLD LIFE. I STARTED HAVING PARTIES, HOPING THE SIGHT OF KIDS HAVING FUN AND DRINKING WOULD REMIND HIM OF WHO HE WAS. SHAKE HIM OUT OF THE GAME.
"I EVEN TRIED MAKING HIM JEALOUS BY SHOWING OFF HOW MUCH THE MOST POPULAR BOY IN SCHOOL WANTED ME. BUT NOTHING WORKED..."
MAYBE THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF THE BOY I LOVED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHEN I MET YOU, I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT YOU.
YOU'D SEEN WHAT I'VE SEEN.
YOU COULD UNDERSTAND ALL THIS LIKE NO ONE ELSE POSSIBLY COULD.
TODAY KELSEY SAW ME, COVERED IN BLOOD, BURYING THAT STUPID JAY KID.
HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND. HE WANTED TO GO TO THE POLICE.

SAARAAAAHH!!
SARA- HELP ME!
PLEASE!
HELP M--
SHUNK
UHKKK
PLEASE TELL ME YOU UNDERSTAND.
TO BE CONTINUED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My First Maniac

BEFORE SHE TRAVELED THE WORLD WITH HER MONSTROUS PARTNER VLAD, HUNTING DOWN AND *DESTROYING* SLASHERS, *CASSIE HACK* WAS THE LONE SURVIVOR OF AN ATTACK BY A SLASHER CALLED THE *LUNCH LADY*... A SLASHER THAT HAPPENED TO BE HER MOTHER!

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SOMEONE ASKED THAT OF ME, THE GIRL WHOSE MOTHER CRAWLED OUT OF A GRAVE WITH A FACE THAT LOOKED LIKE PULLED PORK
ME. THE GIRL WHO DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL SO SHE COULD GO ON A ONE-WOMAN MONSTER HUNT
IF I TOLD PEOPLE WHAT I'VE SEEN, WHAT I BELIEVE IS STILL OUT THERE, LURKING IN THE DARK SPACES...
IF I TOLD PEOPLE WHAT I'VE DONE OR WORSE, WHAT I INTEND TO DO
THEY WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND. NO.

SO IT'S IRONIC THAT THIS GIRL, SARAH BUNN, IS THE ONE WHO GAVE ME THE JESUS TREATMENT. SHE'S THE ONE WHO HOPES I UNDERSTAND. SARAH BUNN, A GIRL IN LOVE WITH A BOY WHO SHOULD BE FEEDING THE WORMS RIGHT NOW NOT BASHING IN TEENAGERS' HEADS.
EVEN MY CURRENT MISSION, I GUESS MAYBE IT'S ALSO IRONIC THAT I'M GOING TO SAY THIS
I UNDERSTAND SARAH.
OH, THANK GOD. I FELT IT, YOU KNOW...WHEN I FIRST MET YOU.
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING. I WAS JUST TOO SCARED TO ASK.
BUT YOUR DIARY... GOD, YOUR MOM.
YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE.
I CAN TALK TO YOU.
YOU'RE JUST LIKE ME.

I'M SO GLAD WE WON'T NEED *THIS*.
I MEAN, HONESTLY, I *HATE* VIOLENCE. AND GUNS ARE THE WORST.
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR YOU GOT WITH YOUR MOM BEFORE YOU HAD TO KILL HER--
AGAIN, I MEAN.
BUT I THINK MAYBE I'VE MADE SOME STRIDES WITH MATTHEW. LIKE I SAID, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF HIM IS LEFT.
MAYBE YOU KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD DO NEXT.
I DO KNOW.
KRAK
GHUH!

UNH... YOU...
YOU BITCH!!
WHY D YOU DO THAT?
BECAUSE I'M GOING TO KILL MATTHEW ONCE AND FOR ALL.
AND I NEED YOU TO STAY THE FUCK OUT OF MY WAY
HOW COULD YOU?!
I THOUGHT WE WERE ALIKE!
I THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD.
I UNDERSTAND.
BUT WE'RE NOTHING ALIKE.

MY MOM WASN'T UNIQUE. THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE HER.
FOR JUST A SECOND I FEEL A RUSH, SOME KIND OF RELIEF. IT WASN'T JUST DELILAH HACK. I'M NOT THE ONLY VICTIM.
THEN THE RELIEF IS GONE. IN ITS PLACE REARS UP ABSOLUTE FUCKING HORROR. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M FIGHTING WHAT MATTHEW CAN DO.
ALL I KNOW IS I'M STEPPING INTO HIS WORLD
AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE RULES.
I HATE FAKE SCARES.

KRRRK
LEVEL ONE!
SHUCK
AND THERE HE IS. THAT SMELL OF DIRT AND BURNT HAIR.
THAT PANIC-ATTACK I'D HAD
I CAN'T FIGHT HIM. I'M NOT A BLUNT OBJECT NOT COVERED IN AN UNTOUCHABLE SPINY SHELL.

I'M JUST A TEENAGE GIRL. DEFENSELESS.
NO MOTHER TO CHASE AWAY THE BULLIES. NO ONE TO KEEP ME SAFE FROM THE BOOGEYMAN.
HE HATES ME.
AHN--!
HE'S NOT GOING TO STOP UNTIL HE'S SLASHED ME OPEN...
AND MY LIFE POURS OUT INTO THE SO...
...NNNGHHHHH

OR MAYBE NOT. I SURVIVED ONCE WHEN SO MANY OTHERS ENDED UP AS NUMBERS IN A BODY COUNT.
I SURVIVED BECAUSE I SUCKED IT UP. I TOOK THAT FEAR AND I STUFFED IT DOWN SOMEPLACE DEEP AND DARK AND FAR AWAY
MY MOM DIDN'T JUST KILL THOSE KIDS. SHE PLAYED WITH THEM
SHE CHASED THEM. TIED THEM UP. TOYED WITH THEM.
SHE FED ON THEIR FEAR. SHE SAVORED EVERY LITTLE WHIMPER AND SCREAM.
AND I'VE JUST GIVEN MATTHEW EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS FROM ME

I HAVE TO USE MY WEAPONS OF CHOICE TO SAY
THE ONES THAT LET ME FIGHT BACK CLOSE RANGE SO HE CAN SEE IN MY EYES THAT I'M NOT AFRAID.
GHYAH
AND I HAVE TO USE THOSE OTHER WEAPONS
YOU LIKE TO CHASE ME GRINFACE?
YOU WANT TO SEE ME FROM BEHIND?
I'M GOING TO POP YOUR FUCKING HEAD OFF.
THEN I'LL LET YOU SEE MY BEHIND.
IT'S NOT THE WORDS..
IT'S THE WAY I SAY THEM THAT MAKES HIM BELIEVE ME

CUZ I'M GOING TO LET YOU KISS IT.
FWUNK
HAHAHA.
FWUCK. OKAY. TAKING THE EGG TO HIM TOOK HIM OFF GUARD
BUT IT DIDN'T TAKE THE FIGHT OUT OF HIM.
WHA--?
POWER UP!

OH GOD
KELSEY, HE DIDN'T FEEL A "WRONGNESS" FROM ME
HE KNEW WHO I REALLY WAS
HE ALMOST HAD ME THINKING I COULD LIVE HERE. BE HIS FRIEND. BE NORMAL
BUT HE WAS SARAH'S "PET PEE-PEE." THE "NICE GUY" IN A SICK GAME TO MAKE THE "BAD BOY" JEALOUS
HE ENDED UP AS COLLATERAL DAMAGE ON A DEAD-END PATH

AND THIS FUCKWAD'S GONNA LEARN JUST WHAT THAT MEANS
C'MON BAD BOY
LET'S SEE THAT HANDSOME FACE
NO MORE HANDSOME FACE. NOW THERE IS ONLY GRINFACE.
I AM GRINFACE.
MOTHERFUCKER, I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE MS. PAC-MAN...
I'M STILL GOING TO INTRODUCE YOUR TEETH TO YOUR FUCKING BRAINSTEM.
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRMMMMMMMMMMMMMM
AH-TSU...!

KNOCK
IS THIS ALL ABOUT KELSEY?
IS THAT IT?
HE TELLS YOU YOU'RE COOL AND WE SEE WHAT YOU'RE REALLY MADE OF--
JUST ANOTHER GIRL WHO GUSHES WHEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM PAYS HER A LITTLE ATTENTION.

HOLES BEFORE POLES, YOU WHITE TRASH BITCH!
IT'S NO WONDER THOSE CHICKS AT YOUR OLD SCHOOL LIKED TO GO ALL REDHEADED STEPCHILD ON YOU.
AND WHO STILL WRITES IN A FUCKING DIARY?!
HOW POOR DOES YOUR FAMILY HAVE TO BE THAT YOU CAN'T EVEN AFFORD A BLOG?!
OH GOD, YOU CRAZY--

"LONER. OUTSIDER SLASHER HUNTER."
HAHA. GAY.
IT'S HAMMER TIME! INSERT COIN!
SUCK MY DICK, BLOOD BUS

AWW, IT'S SO NICE TO SEE YOU OFF YOUR HIGH HORSE
"WE MUST KILL THE SLASHERS. THEY'RE EEE-VIL."
FUCK YOU!
I LOVE MATTHEW. I WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR HIM.
MAYBE IF YOU'D LOVED YOUR MOM MORE...
YOU COULD HAVE CURED HER INSTEAD OF BLOWING HER BRAINS OUT.
YOU EVER THINK OF THAT, "SLASHER HUNTER"?
MMM. MY BOY'S COMING NOW.
I WANT TO KILL YOU. I REALLY DO.
BUT TO SHOW MATTHEW HOW MUCH I LOVE HIM, I'M GONNA LET HIM DO YOU.

SHE'S ALL YOURS, BA--
AGHK!
THWOK
AHHH!
YOU BROKE MY GODDAMN ARM!! WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING MATTHEW?
HE'S NOT MATTHEW. HE'S GRINFACE.
HE'S RUNNING A PRETTY HIGH SCORE RIGHT NOW. HE'S LEVELED UP.
OH, AND GUESS WHAT, SARAH...
YOU KILLED HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I GUESS THAT MAKES YOU "THE BIG BOSS."
OH NO NO MA-- BABY--
DOOON'T--
FWUDD
SPAK

THE BIBLE SAYS JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS AND RETURNED TO SHOW HIS LOVE.
HNNH
HNNH
HNNH
WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO DIED FOR THEIR OWN SINS AND RETURN TO SHOW THEIR HATE
FATALITY!
THE ONES WHO WEREN'T ABLE TO MOVE ON TO HELL
MAYBE THEIR TORMENT IS KNOWING THAT, DESPITE THEIR BEST EFFORTS, PEOPLE STILL LIVE.
PKOW

AND MAYBE AMASSING A BODY COUNT IS THEIR ONLY WAY TO GAIN POINTS. LEVEL UP.
MAYBE.
PKOW
I DON'T KNOW.
ALL I KNOW...
IS THAT THIS GUN DOESN'T FEEL SO HEAVY ANYMORE.
PKOW
PKOW
PKOW
PKOW

C--CUH.
CASSSSSS.
I KNOW YOU...
HUH-HATE ME.
JUST... DON'T LET ME COME BACK.
AS ONE OF THEM.
SARAH. FREE-SPIRITED GIRL WITH A DARK SECRET.
KELSEY. THE GENUINE GOOD GUY.
CASSIE HACK
TWO PEOPLE THAT I ACTUALLY MADE A CONNECTION WITH. TWO POTENTIAL FRIENDS.
BOTH DEAD.
CASSIE HACK
DEAD LIKE MY MOM.

DEAD LIKE CASSIE HACK, TEENAGE GIRL.
PLAY AGAIN!?
SOME STRANGE MURDERS IN CHICAGO THE PAST FEW DAYS. VICTIMS SKINNED, QUARTERED LIKE SO MUCH BUTCHER SHOP MEAT.
THEY TELL A STORY IN THIS SOUTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD. IT'S THE TALE OF AN URBAN GHOST. A MASKED LURKER OF THE ALLEYS, DARTING BETWEEN SHADOWS, GRABBING CHILDREN AND HOMELESS PEOPLE TO BUTCHER. IT'S THE TALE OF "THE MEATMAN."
MAYBE I AM JUST A STUPID, LONELY GIRL. INCOMPLETE. HALF FORMED. TORN APART...

THE BEGINNING!